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Address of  
President Roosevelt  
at Hampton Institute



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HAMPTON INSTITUTE PRESS

## FOREWORD

THE Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute was founded in 1868, five years after the proclamation of the emancipation of slaves. The founder, General S. C. Armstrong, led colored troops during the war and believed firmly in the possibilities of the Negroes while he realized the dangers to which their ignorance exposed them and the nation. At a time when industrial education was practically unknown in this country General Armstrong saw its value in training the masses of the freedmen suddenly thrown upon their own resources. Such training was most unpopular with the Negroes themselves who expected to leave behind all the toils of slavery. Notwithstanding opposition and discouragements and the constant necessity of raising funds, the institution has grown from its opening with 15 colored students to an average attendance of 800 young men and women boarders (including about 125 Indians) and 450 colored children who attend the model training school as day students. Trades, agriculture, and domestic science are taught in connection with a thorough course in grammar school and English high school studies. It is the purpose of the school to train only those who shall become teachers, leaders of industry, and examples of Christian living for the less enlightened of their people to follow. Booker Washington is the most illustrious example of the type of graduate sent out.

The visit of President Roosevelt has meant much to Hampton Institute and to these Negro and Indian students. No speaker has more clearly set forth Hampton's aims and methods than he. He has voiced the ideal of education for which the school has been working since its foundation. The success that has been

achieved in the past has been made possible only through the generosity of men and women who have believed in the capability of these two races and who have realized that they themselves have an individual responsibility in helping to make "good citizens" of those who would otherwise become a menace and a burden to our land. Many have given in the past from their abundance, and many from their poverty. Some of these good friends have laid aside their earthly cares and Hampton is poorer for the loss of their support and sympathy. Others must take their places if the work is to go on.

To all thoughtful men and women and to all loyal Americans North and South, we commend these utterances of one of the foremost statesmen of the time.

H. B. FRISSELL  
Principal



## President Roosevelt's Address

DECORATION DAY, 1906



CAN assure you that Hampton cannot have been more anxious to have a visit from me than I have been to visit Hampton. If there is any work in which every decent American, in or out of office, must believe, it is the work that you are doing here.

What I am going to say to you to-day is only to repeat certain homely rules of life which are so homely and so plain that there ought to be no necessity to repeat them. But homely truths are the ones that are apt to be forgotten and to need repetition.

The first one that I will repeat is that a school like this which strives to raise colored men and colored women (I will have something to say of the Indian men and women later)—strives to make of them better men and better women and better citizens—such a school is also pre-eminently for the interest of white men and white women. There is nothing that can be done more to the interest of the

white men and women who live side by side with the colored than to train the colored to be good citizens. In every community it is for the interest of every man—and when I say man I of course mean woman too—it is for the interest of every man, no matter what his color, to have every other man, no matter what his color, a good citizen.

The safety of the white man is to have the colored man grow to be a good and decent man. From the standpoint of the white man the safest thing for him is to have the colored man become thrifty, industrious, a good home-maker, and a good home-keeper. Never yet has there been a formidable quantity of criminals from a people or a locality where the average type was a good home-maker and home-keeper. So, from the standpoint of the white man, there is nothing better than to give the colored man the real training which he gets here and in similar institutions.

From the standpoint of the colored man, the only real way to help him is to help him to help himself. In the long run in this world no man can be helped in any other way. Everyone sometimes stumbles. You can help him up, but you can't help him by carrying him. He has got to learn to walk himself. What this institution is doing is to teach just that.

You are going to find things not all smooth as you go out into life. Life is not all smooth for any of us. For you it is not as smooth as it is for some; but the only way to make it easier and better for yourself, for your children, and for your children's children, is to put into practice in your actual life the precepts you have been taught here. When once, in any given locality, the average colored man becomes thrifty, law-abiding, and industrious, recognized to be a good, intelligent worker and a desirable neighbor, you may rest assured that you have taken the only step that ever can be



The President Arriving

taken to do away with race antagonism. That colored man helps his race most who helps teach his people to conduct themselves with self-respect as law-abiding, intelligent, hard-working citizens.

It is the homely virtues that count in the long run. No race, no nationality, ever really raises itself by the exhibition of genius in a few; what counts is the character of the average man and average woman. If you can develop in the average colored citizen the traits of courage, truthfulness, the sense of obligation in contracts, willingness to work, the desire to act decently, you have taken the longest step toward gaining for your race respect—self-respect and the respect of others which follows in its train.

In saying this I am not advancing a theory, but I am appealing to invariable experience in the past, notably to the experience of this very institution of Hampton. If I remember rightly you have sent out from here something like six thousand graduates and undergraduates and so few of them have gone hopelessly wrong

that of all the number only two have been recorded as criminals. That fact is an all-sufficient answer to the blind people who say that no good will come from educating the Negro. So far is this from the truth that it may be said the only hope for the Negro—as also for the white man—is education, if we understand the word education in its proper sense. Most emphatically I say that education is not the turning out of people who can read, write, and cipher and yet do nothing practical. Some of the best educated people I know—using the word with reference to the work they have to do—read but little and write not any too well; but they can do their work right up to the handle. If I were asked, on the other hand, to pick out the uneducated men of the community, I should include a great many, white as well as colored, who have learned how to read and write and have thought that that fact excused them from learning how to earn their own livelihood and become good citizens. Any education that teaches that reading, writing, and ciphering are everything is a misfortune to black, white, or red.

You girls, if you don't learn to become good housewives, and, if you marry, to be good help-meets to your husbands, good mothers to your children, then you are not well educated, no matter what else you know.

You men, if you learn all that any institution can teach you of books and yet are not able to turn your hands to usefulness, to earn your own livelihood, to be of use to yourselves and to society at large, then you are not well educated, no matter how many academic prizes you take; and this is as true of white men as of colored.

It is a significant thing that, during the period covered by the life of Hampton Institute, while we have seen the growth of industrial schools for the colored people, we have



The Principal's Residence, Where the Address  
Was Made

also seen an extraordinary growth in agricultural and industrial schools for whites. We are beginning—just beginning—to realize as a nation that we can't afford to believe that we can eliminate from education the training of the hand to work with and under the head. It is often said that the true place for the Negro is in industrial work. Yes, that is true; true of the average Negro; and no less true of the average white man. And we shall not get our civilization on a true basis until we root out from the minds of the average man and the average woman—of any color—the idea that to be a poor clerk is better than to be a first-class hand-worker, a first-class machinist, or first-class agricultural laborer.

The wrong twist that has been given to our education in the past is greatly responsible for the very unhealthy development of our cities at the expense of the country. Never in the past has any nation been permanently great whose city population has become abnormal in size as compared with that of the country; for the people of the farms conserve certain

qualities which those who dwell in the great, swollen cities tend to lose.

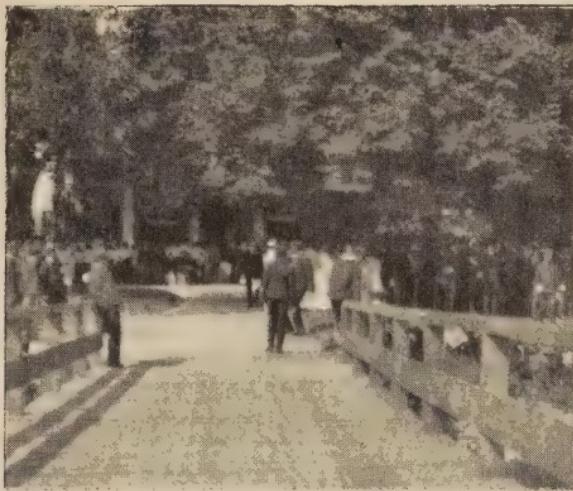
If there is one thing I wish to emphasize more than another it is this: to advise as many of you as can to work upon the farm, and that with the idea and purpose to eventually own your own farm. Take up agricultural work. In doing this you will be doing what, more and more, the most intelligent and advanced white people are growing to recognize as necessary for their own race.

The growth of agricultural colleges has become one of the significant features of educational work for the white race in nearly every state in the Union, because more and more it is realized that the trade of the farmer must be developed scientifically; so that, on the one hand, the profession of agriculture may become more and more attractive to men of brains, and on the other hand, even more clearly recognized as the one profession, the failure to develop which would mean that the development of all the rest of the professions would count but little.

This great continent of ours can go forward in the long run only if there is the right kind of population in it. Cities play a great part in it, and as city people are more able to talk for themselves there is no danger of our forgetting what part they play. But as for the country's part, there is danger of our forgetting it; and yet their part is the most important of all.

Now, in closing, just remember these facts:—

First: The trend of civilization is more and more to recognize and put weight upon the vital part played by the manual worker, by the man who actually works with his hands, whether in the workshop or on the farm. Things are more and more going to shape themselves so that he shall have full recognition; not that there should ever be recognition of a laboring man's right to be lazy or envious, but of the



The Outdoor Auditorium

right on his part to the respectful recognition by everyone of the importance of the work that he does. It is the work of the man who works with his hands which counts for the most in the end, provided that that hand work is directed by an intelligent brain. Instead of striving, as we have so often done in the past, to divide the work of the brain from the work of the hand, more and more our effort must be to keep the hand-worker as a hand-worker, but to make him work with his brains too; so that the majority of our people will naturally turn to hand-work but will do it in conjunction with the best kind of mental effort.

I want to see the colored man share in the benefits of this movement. He can do this only by becoming the best, most intelligent kind of hand-worker himself, and above all by becoming this kind of hand-worker on the farm, working for others first but ultimately for himself; ultimately owning and tilling his own farm.

Second: The next thing for you to remember is that the greatness of any nation, the suc-

cess of any race, must always, in the last analysis, depend upon the kind of home-life, of family life, to be found in its average family group. If it has the right type of home life it will be successful; if not, nothing else can avail to bring real success. Let every man and woman, every boy and girl here, keep this in mind: that the true success of your people must come in developing and raising family life; so that the average husband and the average son shall be of the best type of respectable, hard-working, intelligent bread-winners; the average mother and the average daughter be the fitting helpmeets of the men, able to make the home attractive, and of such character that the race shall be elevated, generation by generation.

And I am certain that all who admire, as I do, the work of Hampton, will agree with me that great as has been its work for the development of the mind, great as has been its work for the training of the hand in the work of the farm and the shop and the home, the work that has counted most is the training that Hampton gives to character. The most important thing of all is character. I mean not only that which makes you good, but that which makes you strong; which makes you not only careful not to offend others but possessors of a rugged strength to better yourselves and others.

While I have been speaking to the colored people, what I have said applies just as much to the Indian; and indeed just as much to white people. I don't know any code of morality, I don't know any words of advice, which can be put advantageously to one race alone. Character is not a thing that depends upon race characteristics any more than the ability to perform manual labor. If you are good, you are good, whatever your color. If you are worthless, you are worthless, whatever your color. There



Memorial Church

is one distinction to be made. Remember that while a good man of your race may help any other race as well as his own, a bad man of your race is infinitely worse for your race than for any other. A Negro criminal, no matter at whose expense the particular crime may be committed, is a hundred-fold more dangerous to the Negro race than he is to the white race; because his criminality tends to arouse race animosity and the bitter prejudices from which not only he but his whole race will suffer.

In the interest of the colored folk, see to it, every colored man here, that you war against criminality in your own race with peculiar zeal; because, in the ultimate analysis, it is a greater danger to your own race than to any other.

I ask then, you colored people, that you show the same virtues that the white people must show if they are to be good citizens; to remember that it is good to have a trained mind, that it is better to have also a trained body to work under the direction of the trained mind, and that it is better than all to have a good and strong character.



The Water Front of Hampton Institute

In the name of the people of the United States I say Godspeed to Hampton, because it has developed and is developing character, not only to benefit its pupils of the colored and Indian races but to benefit all the people among whom they go.

I congratulate you upon your work and upon your opportunity here, and I charge you, not only for the sake of Hampton but for the sake of your country and for the sake of your own races, to use aright the opportunity that has been given you.

Students' tuition is provided for by scholarships as follows:

Permanent academic	\$2000
Permanent industrial	800
Annual academic	70
Annual industrial	30

These are solicited from individuals, societies, and churches.

Each year it is necessary, in order to supplement the school's regular income, to raise \$100,000 for running expenses.

The endowment fund is inadequate, a fund of \$3,000,000 being needed to place the institution on a firm foundation. All bequests are added to the endowment. Any gift, however small, is acceptable and helpful. Donations may be addressed to H. B. Frissell, Principal, or F. K. Rogers, Assistant Treasurer.





